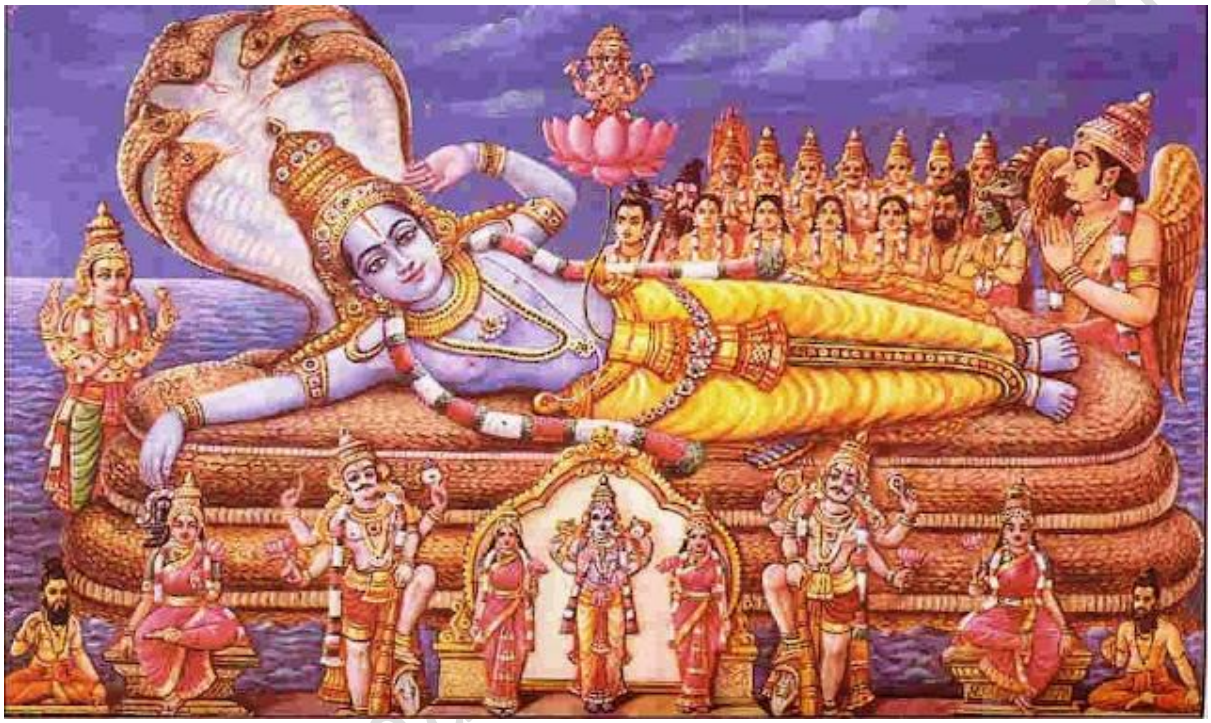
Vaikunta Ekadasi – Mukkoti Dwadasi

(Significance of Uttara Dwaara Darshanam)



Introduction

Ekaadasi is the 11th lunar day (thithi) of Hindu calendar that occurs twice in a lunar month both in Sukla paksha (bright fortnight) as well as in Krishna paksha (dark fortnight). That means we get two Ekaadasi days in a lunar month and in a year, there will be 24 Ekaadasi days; sometimes even more whenever there is Adhika maasam as per lunar calendar.

Ekaadasi is the most favourite day of Lord Vishnu and that's why it is also known as Hari-Dina the day dedicated to Lord Sri Hari (Vishnu). Ekaadasi has attained lot of prominence in Hindu religion as it is the most sacred day prescribed for worshiping Lord Vishnu. We find devout Hindus observe fasting on

Ekaadasi and spend the whole day in spiritual pursuits. It is said that there is no austerity that is equivalent to Ekaadasi Vratha in terms of merits. Including Padma Purana several sacred scripts have eulogized the significance and merits of Ekaadasi Vratha. It is said that,

न गायत्राय पर मंत्र | न मातृ पर दैवतं |

न काश्य परं तीर्थं | न एकादश्य समं व्रतं ||

na gāyatrāya para maṃtra | na mātṛ para daivataṃ |

na kāśya paraṃ tīrthaṃ | na ekādaśya samaṃ vrataṃ ||

That means, there is no manthra that is superior to Gaayathri manthra; there is no Daivam (Deity) superior to Mother; there is no sacred theertha (pilgrimage) better than Kaasi; and there is no Vratha (austerity) that is more meritorious than that of Ekaadasi Vratha.

Ekaadasi Vratha [DinaThraya] aacharana as per norms is oriented towards mitigating sins, moksha saadhana. Partaking meals only once on the day of Dasami and Dwaadasi, and fasting completely on Dasami (night); Ekaadasi (day & night); Dwadasi (night) total FOUR upavasas constitute Dinatrya put-together called Ekaadasi Vratha.

Sri Madhvacharya says in kriShNAmRutamahArNava that the fire of merit of observing Ekaadasi converts the sins of hundreds of births into ashes.

While Ekaadasi aacharana & worshiping Lord Vishnu is very important, it is equally important to worship Lord Vishnu on Dwaadasi Day and partake food (paarane) in time to reap the fruits of Ekaadasi Vratha. Lord Vishnu (SriHari) is abhimaanidEvata for Dwaadasi thithi.

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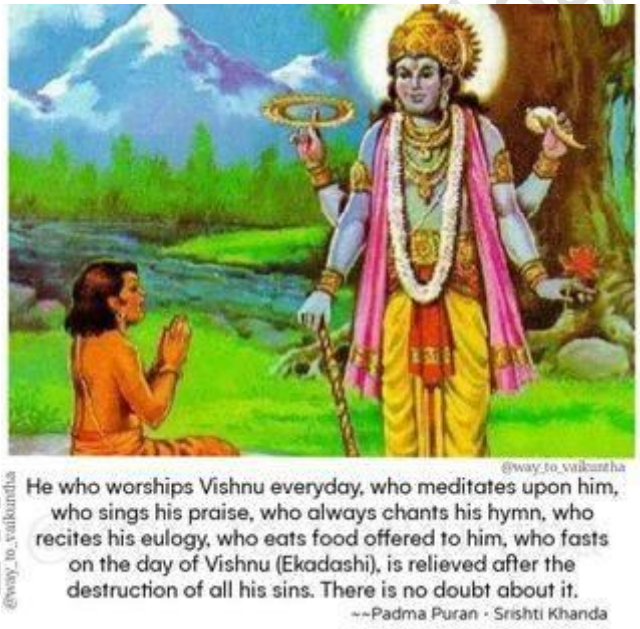
Pithru Sraaddha/Tharpana should not be performed on the day of Ekaadasi aacharana. It should be performed on Dwaadasi day.

Upavaasa does not mean mere fasting, it means UPA+VaAsa = Saameepya Vaasa, dwelling in proximity to Bhagavantha with ARchana, Japa, SRavana, Manana, Keerthana, NiraAhaara and JaAgarana.

Fasting becomes futile if it is not accompanied by sincere prayer, meditation with focus on Supreme God SriHari. Religious doctrines have testified incredible wisdom of spirituality should one fast earnestly associated with prayer that immensely pleases the Supreme God Vishnu.



Significance of Vaikunta Ekaadasi

Ekaadasi that occurs in sukla paksha (bright fortnight) of the lunar Month either Margasira maasam or Pushya maasam coinciding with sacred solar month Dhanurmasam is reckoned as Vaikunta Ekaadasi. Though all Ekaadasi days are equal in merits, Vaikunta Ekaadasi has attained lot of prominence in terms of spirituality as it occurs during Dhanurmasam before the onset of Uttaraayana.

If it occurs in Margasira maasam it is also known as Mokshada Ekaadasi (capable of bestowing salvation) and if it occurs in Pushya maasam it is also called as Puthrada Ekaadasi (capable of bestowing progeny).

According to Padma Purana, Ekaadasi is depicted as the female energy of Lord Vishnu who, in the form of a damsel manifested on this day; killed the demon Mura and protected the Indraadi Devathas. Pleased by the act of His female energy Lord Vishnu named her as Ekaadasi. He also gave her a boon that whoever worship Ekaadasi and observe fasting on this day would reach His abode Vaikunta and his doors would be open for such people.

Vaikunta is one of the several thousand names of Lord Vishnu. Vaikunta is His abode. It is the place where He resides along with his consort Goddess Lakshmi Devi resting on Aadisesha. It is also known as Paramapadam the supreme abode and the most coveted place. It is the sacred abode where every soul would be longing to go and stay eternally.

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Nearest reference to Vaikunta we find in Sri Vishnu Sahasranama Stothram sloka # 44 which reads as follows…

वैकुण्ठः पुरुषः प्राणः प्राणदः प्रणवः पृथुः |

हिरण्यगर्भः शत्रुघ्नो व्याप्तो वायुरधोक्षजः ||

vaikuṇṭhaḥ puruṣaḥ prāṇaḥ prāṇadaḥ praṇavaḥ pṛthuḥ |

hiraṇyagarbhaḥ śatrughno vyāpto vāyuradhokṣajaḥ ||

Meaning (the gist of which as follows…)

Lord Vishnu also known as Vaikunta is the remover of obstacles and sins and Vaikunta is the place which removes obstacles. He is the one who has united all the Pancha Bhoothas and made them to co-exist with each other. He is the Purifier and the one who gives in plenty. He is the primordial person who existed before anything else, and the one who is the cause of the origin and end of the world. He is the one who outshines everyone. He burns away all the sins of his devotees. He is the life giver and is the vital air that gives or sustains life. He is the Praana (life) to everyone including Devathas. He is the one who makes others bow before Him and the one who deserves to be adored. He is the one who expands himself as Cosmos. He is as pure as Gold. He is the one who delights every one's heart.

Lord Vaikunta is the slayer of enemies (Arishadvargas) of people and also destroyer of enemies of Gods. He is the one who is full of benevolence, love and affection without any discrimination. He is the one who is omnipresent and there is no single place where he does not exist. He is the one who manifests himself, never gets diminished, never undergoes degeneration; He is the all-pervasive Supreme God; He is Aumkaara pratipaadya; Sri ManNaaraayana;

He is Adhokshajah. ADHOKSHAJA is one of the features of the supreme God SriManNaaraayana. Akshaja means knowledge emanating from senses. Adhokshaja is He who is beyond perception through senses, beyond knowledge acquired through senses, the one who has eternal knowledge which will not degenerate or perish.

VAIKUNTA is one of the several thousand names of Lord Vishnu and also Vaikunta is His abode. It is Vishnu loka, Vishnu Swarga named after Vaikunta naamaka ParamaAtma the one (Vishnu) who stays in Vaikunta.

Kunta means cHyuti (naAsha/perish); Vishnu is Achyuta the one Who doesn't vanish, He is invincible, He is Vi+Kunta = the

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one who doesn't have cHyuti and Vaikunta is the place that never perishes even during maHa-prAlaya.

In a literary sense Kunta means the one who is indolent, stupid, foolish, asaAmartya and Vaikunta is the one who prevents/protects men from going astray into wrong paths.

It is also that in one of the Manvantharas (ChaAkshuva) Lord Vishnu incarnated as son of a Rushi-Patni called Vikunta hence came to known as Vaikunta.

Vaikunta is the place where Lord Vishnu resides along with his consort Goddess Lakshmi Devi resting on Aadisesha.

Vaikunta is also known as ParaMapadam the supreme abode and the most coveted place. It is located at distance of 16.25 crores Yojanas above Bhooloka;

Sri VaAdiraAjaru has written an exclusive Kannada Text (Grantha) on the glory and significance of Vaikunta called "Vaikunta Varnane"

The ultimate aim/sadhana for a soul is to attain Moksha that can be given by One and the Only person the Primordial Supreme God Vishnu the VaAsudeva neither by Brahma nor by Shiva. He is the Vaikunta the one who resides in Vaikunta,

MuktaanaaM ParamaaGatiH (SVSN - sloka # 2) - He is the Moksha Pradhatha, bestower of ultimate salvation to the deserving souls including Brahmaadi Devathas. He is the ultimate source, ultimate direction, ultimate shelter for the fully liberated souls.

"MoksHam NaaraAyanaaddHichhett" Only a SarVottama can give Moksha. He is Vaikunta, He is the Moksha. He is the ParamaAtma. He resides in Vaikunta, the sacred abode where every soul would be longing to go and stay eternally.

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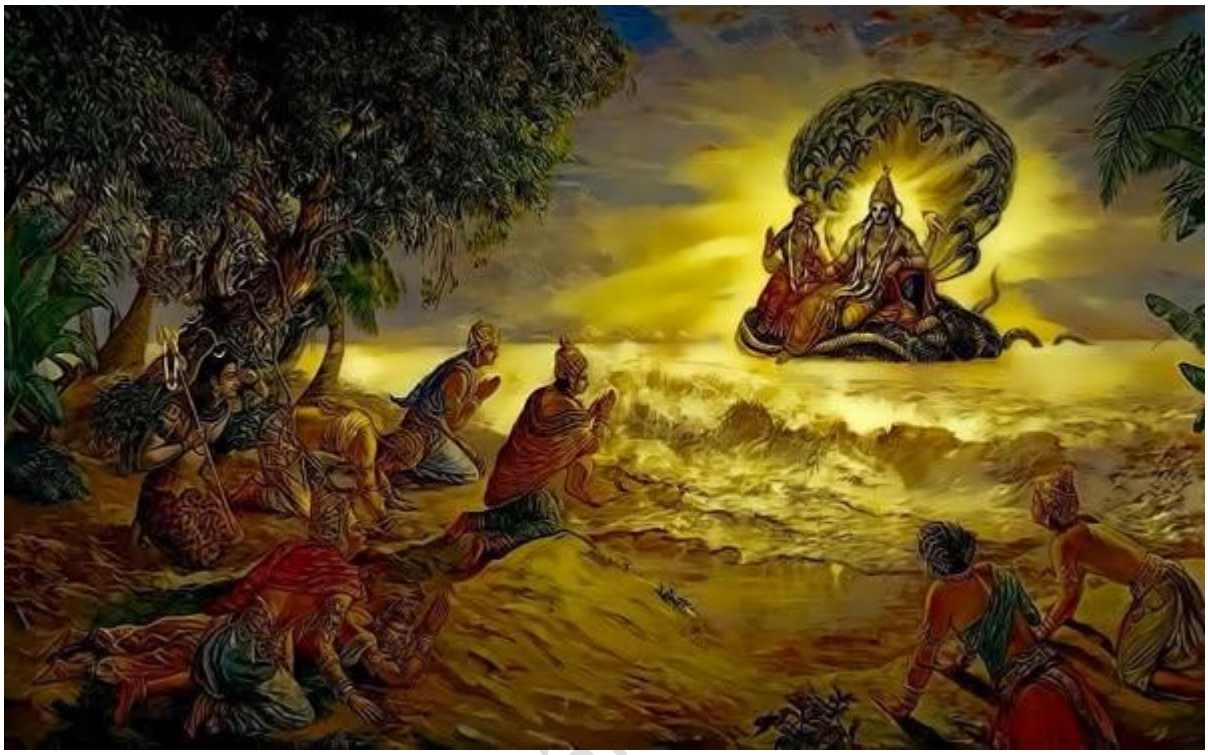
Giving Moksha is an exclusive prerogative of Lord SriManNarayana. If Lord Sri Hari is the giver of Moksha, then it is obvious that He is the Sarvottama the Supreme God Vishnu.



VaiKuNta (muKkoTi) eKaAdAsi

(significance of UTTARA-dwAaRa dArsHana)

Vaikunta EkaAdasi is also known as Mukkoti Ekaadasi. Dwaadasi thithi following Vaikunta Ekaadasi is called Mukkoti Dwaadasi.

Uttara means north and dwaara means the gate or opening.

Like we have geographical directions (North, South, East, & West) to the world, we also have similar directions to our body.

North is towards our head, south is towards our feet, front portion is east and back portion is west.

On top of the head (skull) we have a hole called Brahma Randhra (Sahasraara Chakra) towards the Northern direction

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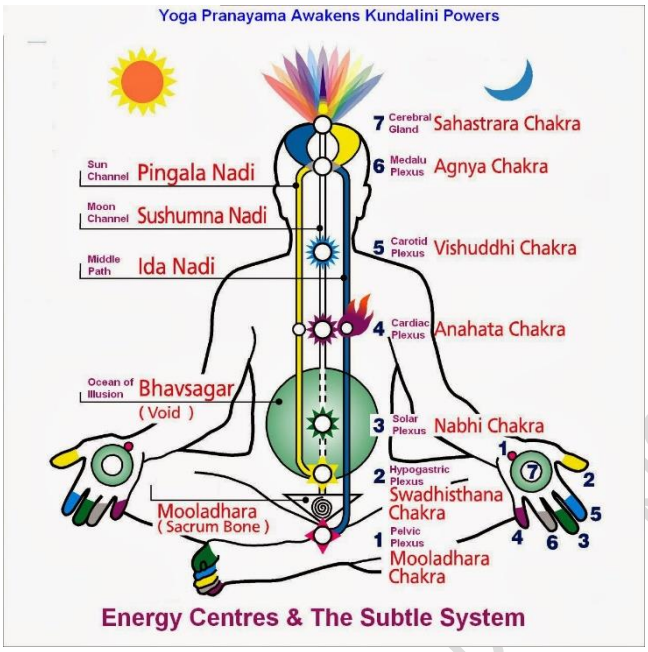
which is not visible. Since it is in the northern direction it is called Northern gate of the human body.



It is said that one should visualize the image of God through the route of...

Ida; Pingala Naadi (which run through left and right nostrils) and Sushumna Naadi (running through centre of the nose);

concentrating at midpoint of the eyebrows called Jnaana Nethra where Aajna chakra is located;

take it further upwards to the centre of the head, where Sahasraara chakra is located and

have darshan of the God through the door that gets opened Brahma Randhra when we meditate.

This is how one should visualize God even during daily prayers or whenever one visits a temple.

Since it is through the route of the confluence of three naadis (Ida, Pingala and Sushumna) taken further north towards the Sahasraara Chakra it is called Mukkoti.

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Koti also means an angle; a knot; an edge and Mu means tying or binding.

Having darshana of the Lord from an angle where the three Naadi's meet is spiritually known as Uttara dwaara darshana and the day is known as Mukkoti Ekaadasi.

There are fourteen lokaas (worlds) in this Universe;

seven above (including Earth) and seven below.

Above the Earth are called Uurdhwa Lokaas which are in the Northern direction and Vaikunta is one among them in the Northern direction.

Darshan of the lord of Vaikunta (which is in the northern direction) Lord Vishnu on this day which is nearer to Uttaraayana the most auspicious time also catches significance for Uttara dwaara darshana.

On this most sacred day of Mukkoti Ekaadasi one should have darshan of the Lord in this form and to give significance to this concept perhaps all temples provide darshan of the Lord on this day through the northern entrance that is popularly known as Uttara dwaara darshana.

Bhagawad Darshana is always auspcious/subha; paapa-haaraka; it should always be UtTara-DwaAra Darshana;

that need not be on Mukkoti Ekaadasi alone;

It is believed that on this sacred day of Mukkoti Ekaadasi, BrahmaAdi Devatas will have darshana of Lord Vishnu at His abode Vaikunta during Arunodaya kaala.

Mukkoti Ekaadasi that occurs during Dhanur Maasa also signifies worshiping of Lord Vishnu during Arunodayakaala around which time DEvatas also worship and have darshan of the Supreme God Sri Hari Sarvottama - Lord Vishnu;

What can be done on this day?

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Worshiping Lord Vishnu (according to ones' sampradaya and yogyata) on this day as well as on the next day (Mukkoti Dwaadasi) during Arunodaya kaala (two hours before Sunrise) is prescribed.

Since Ekaadasi is the female energy of Bhagavantha, it is auspicious and sacred to worship Goddess Lakshmi Devi also on this day.

Total fasting (nirjala upavaasa) is prescribed on any Ekaadasi day and more so if it is Vaikunta Ekaadasi. One can undertake fasting according to one's physical fitness. Those who cannot undertake total fasting may at least resort to partial fasting by taking fruits or milk; but, please avoid taking rice/grains/salt on this day. Fasting becomes futile if it is not accompanied with sincere prayer and meditation.

Prayer & Paarayana

According to one's sampradaya, yatha shakti, yatha yogyata, one may choose any of the Vishnu related prayers like,

Vishnu Sahasranama Stothram; Sahasra Naamaavali, Vishnu Ashtottara Naamaavali, Bhagawad Gita.

Those who cannot recite them, can chant at least,

Narayana Ashtakashari, Dwadasakshari; Venkatesha Ashtakshqari, SriRama naama, Namathraya Japa, Shodasnama Manthra (Hare Rama, Hare Krishna) as many number of times as possible.

It is befitting and considered to be the most auspicious day to worship Lord Sri ManNaaraayana along with Goddess Lakshmi Devi and to have Uttara Dwaara darshanam (both physically and spiritually) of the Lord on this day of Vaikunta Ekaadasi.

Special celebrations are held on this occasion at all Vishnu related temples especially at Tirumala Kshethra, Sri Rangam,

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Bhadrachalam etc. where thousands of devotees gather to have Uttara Dwaara darshanam of the Lord.

MUKkOTI DWaADASI

(Sri Swami Pushkarini Theertha Mukkoti at Tirumala Kshetra)

Lord Vishnu is the presiding deity of Dwaadasi thithi and worshiping Him on Dwaadasi day is part of Ekaadasi Vratha.

Dwaadasi thithi following Vaikunta Ekaadasi is called Mukkoti Dwaadasi occurring in the sacred solar month of Dhanurmasam.

At Tirumala Kshethra the abode of Lord Venkateswara (Srinivasa) special significance is given to Mukkoti Dwaadasi.

According to Brahma Purana-anthargatha Sri Venkatachala Mahatmya, Swami Pushkarini at Tirumala Kshethra is a manifestation of the Holy Saraswathi who did severe penance and got a boon from Lord Vishnu and has positioned there at Tirumala as per directions of the supreme God Sri Hari.

As per the boon, Lord Vishnu accorded Swami Pushkarini the status of Sreshtattva (superiority) among all the Theerthas (Pushkarinis').

According to Brahma Puraana-anthargatha Sri Venkatachala Mahatmya, as per the command given by Lord Vishnu, 3 ½ Crore sacred Theerthas in the entire Bhoomandala will enter Swami Pushkarini at Tirumala Kshethra on the day of Mukkoti Dwaadasi to get themselves purified.

With this anecdote, taking bath in Swami Pushkarini on the day of Mukkoti Dwaadasi during Arunodaya kaala is considered highly meritorious and equivalent to taking bath in all the 3½ Cr sacred theerthas.

This day is revered as Sri Swami Pushkarini Theertha Koti in the calendar of Tirumala temple.

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One can imagine the holiness of Swami Pushkarini at Tirumala Kshethra and a bath in this sacred Theertha is prescribed on a pilgrimage to Tirumala Kshethra.

The lake on the banks of which ParamaATma SrinivaAsa resides that lake is Paavana-Punya Theertha and to reside on the banks of such lake only virtuous (PunyaAtma) will get. [Sanaka Rushi vachana (Padma Puranaantargata Sri Venkatachala Mahatmya - Swami Pushkarini Mahatmya)]

According to BraHma Purana-anthargatha Sri Venkatachala Mahatmya there are 66 crores sacred Theerthas on VenkataAdri the sacred abode of Lord Venkateswara.

Out of which 1008 are prominent, out of which 108 are considered as JnyaAna pradaayini, out of which 68 are capable of bestowing Bhakti/Vairagya, out of which 7 are Mukti pradayni and out of which ONE is highly meritorious ie. SWAMI PUSHKARINI Theertha.

Swami Pushkarini smarana while getting up from the bed is Punyadayaka (BhaAradhwaja Muni vachana).

According to Varaha Purana, Dasaratha Maharaja as per the directions of Vasihta Rushi visited Venkatachala Kshethra in his quest for Puthra bhaAgya and performed austerities at the holy Swami Pushkarini Theertha. It is also said that Bhagawanta Sri Ramachandra Prabhu also visited and took bath in the sacred waters of Swami Pushkarini.

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One can imagine the holiness of Swami Pushkarini at Tirumala Kshethra on the banks of which Lord SriniVaasa (Venkateswara) is delightedly stationed since time immemorial,

SwaAmiPusHkaraNitheErey RaMayaA SaHa ModatHey

and a bath in this sacred Theertha is prescribed on a pilgrimage to Tirumala.

Sri Krishnaarpanamasthu

nAham kartA hariH kartA

MAY THE SUPREME GOD SRI LAKSHMI-NARAYANA BLESS THE HUMANITY WITH HIS GRACE AND SAVE THE MANKIND FROM ALL THE EVILS.

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